

MONTGOMERY COUNTY
PEDESTRIAN AND TRAFFIC SAFETY ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Annual Report - November, 2009

I. Introduction to the Pedestrian and Traffic Safety Advisory Committee

Origin and Purpose

In response to record numbers of pedestrian fatalities in Montgomery County in the late 1990s, County Executive Douglas Duncan appointed the *Blue Ribbon Panel on Pedestrian and Traffic Safety* in the summer of 2000. The panel developed a plan to improve pedestrian and traffic safety in the county through education, enforcement, engineering, and legislation. One key recommendation called for establishing a formal committee appointed by the County Executive. The *Montgomery County Pedestrian Safety Advisory Committee* was established by Council Resolution 14-1281 on May 23, 2002. (amended 10/11/05).

Pedestrian safety continues to be a top priority for the County. In December, 2007, County Executive Isiah Leggett issued a seven-point strategic plan for reducing pedestrian-related collisions and making our communities safer, more walkable, and more livable.

The committee was renamed to the Pedestrian and Traffic Safety Advisory Committee (PTSAC) by the County Council in 2008.

The purpose of the Pedestrian and Traffic Safety Advisory Committee (PTSAC) is to:

- advise the County Executive and County Council on the status of the implementation of the Pedestrian Safety Initiative
- provide advice to elected officials on the priorities and needs for pedestrians and bicyclists
- identify issues regarding pedestrian and bicycle safety that need to be addressed

Membership

There are 17 members of the PTSAC appointed by the County Executive and confirmed by the County Council to serve three-year terms. Eight members of the PTSAC include representatives from the organizations/agencies listed below (the 2009 representatives are shown in parentheses):

- Police (Lt. Ronald Smith and Lt. James Humphries)
- Public Works and Transportation (Arthur Holmes, Jr.)
- Montgomery County Public Schools (Sylvia Morrison and James D'Andrea)
- MC Park and Planning Commission (Charles Kines and Justin Clarke)
- Regional service centers (Kenneth Hartman)
- Maryland Municipal League (John B. Britton)
- County Council (Valerie Ervin represented by Benjamin Stutz and Richard Romer)
- State Highway Administration (Peter Moe)

The remaining nine seats are the Public-at-Large, representing various communities and viewpoints, including one bicycle advocate. The nine at-large members in 2009 included:

- Honorable William Bronrott
- Gerald Donaldson
- William Frick
- Steven Friedman (bicycle advocate)
- John Howley
- Linda Sobel Katz
- Erwin Mack, Chair
- Alan Migdall
- Colleen Mitchell

- Alyce Ortuzar
- Jack Strausman
- Ramin Assa
- Doris Depaz

A staff person from the Montgomery County Department of Transportation's Office of the Director is assigned to facilitate and coordinate the PTSAC. Jeff Dunckel, Pedestrian Safety Coordinator served in this role in 2009.

Pedestrian Safety Initiative

The Pedestrian Safety Initiative issued by County Executive Isiah Leggett establishes goals to:

- Reduce pedestrian-related crashes, injuries, fatalities and their associated social and economic costs
- Ensure that all areas of the County provide safe and convenient travel options for pedestrians¹

The Pedestrian Initiative details seven strategies (outlined below) to meet these goals, and establishes timeframes and budgets to achieve each strategy. The Pedestrian Safety Steering Committee helps prioritize funding for specific projects identified in the Initiative, and is supported by input from the Pedestrian Safety Implementation Group, CountyStat and the PTSAC. Implementation of the full initiative is estimated at approximately \$4.8 million in recurring annual costs. However, because of budget constraints, the FY2009 budget included funding only for a portion of the first strategy². In 2009, funds from the County's speed camera program were designated to be used to support the Pedestrian Safety Initiative, with the goal of fully funding the Initiative. The FY10 Budget, approved in FY09, funds a major portion of the original Initiative.

"My Pedestrian Safety Initiative outlines a strategic plan that protects the lives of our families, those who walk, those who bicycle, and -- yes -- those who drive...Every resident deserves a truly walkable community, and I am committed to improving the pedestrian environment for future generations."

- Montgomery County Executive Isiah Leggett, press conference 9/8/2008

Pedestrian Safety Initiative Strategies:

- Strategy 1:** Target pedestrian safety improvements in High Incidence Areas
- Strategy 2:** Assess and improve pedestrian network and connectivity needs
- Strategy 3:** Increase emphasis on pedestrians and bicyclists during the planning process
- Strategy 4:** Identify and implement corridor and intersection modifications and traffic calming treatments
- Strategy 5:** Upgrade pedestrian signals
- Strategy 6:** Assess and enhance street lighting
- Strategy 7:** Modify pedestrian and driver behavior through enhanced enforcement and educational efforts

¹ http://www.mcgov.org/Apps/Council/PressRelease/PR_details.asp?PrID=4119

² http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/Apps/News/press/PR_details.asp?PrID=4850

II. Year in Review

Meetings and procedures in 2009

As a general rule, the Pedestrian and Traffic Safety Advisory Committee meets every other month on the first Thursday of the month from 7:00 PM to 9:00 PM. Additional meetings were added in between as needed. The PTSAC met eight times in 2009 on the following dates:

- January 8
- February 5
- March 5
- May 7
- July 9
- September 3
- October 1
- November 5

Minutes are prepared and provided online following each meeting. In October of 2009 the PTSAC decided to extend the meeting time by 30 minutes to be able to cover all the required agenda items. In addition to formal meetings, discussions on specific topics occur via email and phone calls.

Subcommittees

In the Spring of 2009, several subcommittees were formed focused on specific topic areas. The subcommittees allow more technical topics that cannot be adequately addressed in the time allotted for meetings to be investigated by a smaller group which reports back to the full committee, with recommendations. Subcommittees formed in 2009 include:

- BRAC Medical Center Access
- Bicycle Access and Safety
- Innovative Pedestrian Signal Engineering
- Traffic Calming
- Annual Report

Key Initiatives and Topics

In 2009, the PTSAC addressed and took positions on several major topics affecting pedestrian safety in Montgomery County:

▪ ***Speed Camera Revenue for Fire and Rescue Apparatus***

At the January 2009 meeting, the PTSAC discussed funding for the Montgomery County Pedestrian Safety Initiative. At the time, the County Council was proposing a bill that would dedicate 50 percent of all speed camera revenues and red light camera revenues to the purchase of fire and rescue equipment, 15 percent to traffic safety, and 35 percent to the Pedestrian Safety Initiative. Of that 35 percent, 25 percent would go to municipalities with speed cameras but no police departments. (Poolesville is the only municipality that meets these criteria.)

The PTSAC expressed concerns about this bill, because 9 percent of all speed and red light camera revenues would be going to Poolesville, which has had far fewer pedestrian collisions than other parts of the county in recent years. PTSAC Chair Erwin Mack shared these concerns, along with the Committee's desire to see full funding of the Pedestrian Safety Initiative, during testimony to the full County Council on January 13, 2009.

▪ **Cedar Street Bike Lane**

At the February meeting, the PTSAC discussed the Cedar Street Bike Lane Improvement Project. Two options had been proposed by MCDOT:

1. A bike lane on the west side of Cedar Street, with parking moving to the east side of the road.
2. A bike lane on the west side of Cedar Street, with parking remaining on the west side, as it currently exists.

Because Concept 1 would require a shift in current parking, 2/3 of the residents needed to support this change. MCDOT sent forms to all 13 residents on the street, of which 5 responded that they preferred Concept 2. After significant discussion, the PTSAC approved the following motion: ***“The Committee recognizes that Concept Number 1 (with parking on the east side of the street) is a safer facility for bicyclists, residents, and pedestrians. The Committee encourages the County to seek further input from the residents on approving Concept 1.”*** At the March meeting of the PTSAC, the following motion passed with one objection: ***“Record that the County Executive has, as an option, the ability to override the 2/3 majority of the neighbors.”***

▪ **Prioritization of Funding for Pedestrian Safety Activities**

At the February meeting, the PTSAC reviewed a list of all the components of the County Executive’s Pedestrian Safety Initiative, as well as other components from the action plan. Each member of the PTSAC then participated in a “value voting” exercise to develop a list of priorities. Each member was given 12 stickers and then asked to place those dots next to the components that they believed were most important. Each member had the option to place multiple stickers next to components they believed were especially important. The results of this value voting are listed below, with the number of votes for each item displayed on the left:

13	Safe Routes to School Acceleration
13	High Incidence Area (HIA) Actions
12	Enhanced Crosswalk Installation/Maintenance
8	Redesign/Reconstruct Roads and Intersections
7	Education/Outreach County-wide Campaign
6	Sidewalk Construction
6	Streetlight Inspection Program
6	New Streetlighting - MSHA Projects
5	Enhanced County-wide Enforcement - Police
5	Reassess Pedestrian Signal Timing
5	Empahsis During Site Review on Improved Ped Access
4	Network Facility Plan (Inventory - PDS)
4	New Streetlighting - Upgrades
3	Traffic Signals - Accessible Ped Signals
3	Establish Ped Safety Work Group in Traffic Division -MCPD
2	Data Analyst for Police
2	Improve Pedestrian Connectivity - Construct Ped Bridges
2	Improve Pedestrian Connectivity - at Metro Rail Stations
2	Continue Expansion of Speed Camera Enforcement
0	Lighting Evaluation
0	Enforcement of Ped Accommodation in Work Zone (Inspectors)
0	Expand General Sidewalk Maintenance
0	Improve Trail Maintenance
0	Survey Sidewalk and Trail Conditions

- **Meeting with County Executive**

Members of the PTSAC met with the County Executive on February 12. One major item that was discussed was the Committee's opposition to the construction of a pedestrian bridge at the new Silver Spring Library. The Committee also stated its commitment to diversity being represented in its membership and the committee's desire to see full funding of the pedestrian safety initiative.

- **Driver Education DVD**

At the March meeting, Esther Bowring from the Public Information Office described the work on a new driver education video entitled *Drive Safe*. Throughout the spring, members of the committee reviewed the concepts and the script and provided feedback to Esther Bowring for use in preparation of the final video.

- **Silver Spring Library Pedestrian Bridge**

In February, the PTSAC submitted to the County Council and the County Executive its position on the proposed Silver Library pedestrian bridge to connect the new Silver Spring Library with the parking garage across the street. **"The PTSAC does not support the construction of a pedestrian bridge across Wayne Avenue in downtown Silver Spring. More cost-efficient and proven improvements that will serve a greater number of library patrons as well as the Silver Spring community should be pursued and prioritized to provide access to the new library."**

The PTSAC continued this discussion, and revisited its position, at meetings throughout the spring. After significant consideration, the committee maintained its recommendation that the bridge not be constructed, although the committee noted the importance of planning for pedestrian access and access for individuals with disabilities at the ground level.

- **Speed Camera Program Review**

At the September meeting, the PTSAC reviewed the summary report of the speed camera evaluation prepared by the Office of Legislative Oversight. The PTSAC approved a motion to support the summary document as written. Two motions for amendments were also approved by the PTSAC:

1. **"There should be more coordination between the Safe Speed Program and the Pedestrian Safety Initiative."**
2. **"Ensure the visibility of speed cameras and speed limits by using adequate warning signs."**

- **BRAC and Medical Center Station Access for Pedestrians and Bicyclists**

At the September meeting, the PTSAC received a letter from five Councilmembers, requesting it review and evaluate the WMATA recommendations for Metro's Medical Center Station Access in association with BRAC and the consolidation of Walter Reed Medical Center into the Bethesda Naval Hospital. An additional option was presented to the committee in October – a multi-modal tunnel under Rockville Pike. A recommendation to the Council is expected at the end of 2009.

III. Looking Forward

The following topics are currently under review by the PTSAC as it ends the 2009 calendar year. The PTSAC expects continued attention on the topics throughout 2010.

- **Outreach and education.** The PTSAC places a high priority on effective education and outreach, particularly to diverse populations, youth, and older adults and is examining strategies for accomplishing this goal.
- **Pedestrian connectivity and improved pedestrian signals.** The PTSAC supports the efforts of Montgomery County to improve pedestrian connectivity by accelerating sidewalk construction and installing pedestrian signals that provide audible feedback, as well as extending the pedestrian walk timing at intersections throughout the County. A sub-committee is examining additional technology and practices that can build upon this program.

- **Bicycle Issues.** The Bicycle sub-committee is reviewing the regulations and unique issues shared by bicycle commuters and will provide recommendations on advancing safety and access for bicyclists.
- **Traffic calming treatments.** The PTSAC is monitoring Council discussions on County traffic calming policies and programs will provide appropriate input.
- **Implementation of High Incident Area Study Recommendations.** The County has now completed four pedestrian safety audits in areas with high numbers of pedestrian/vehicle collisions. The detailed audits are intended to identify comprehensive recommendations for improving pedestrian safety. The PTSAC will need to work to monitor the implementation of the recommendations.

In the coming year, the PTSAC will focus on implementing and executing the County Executive's Pedestrian Safety Initiative, as defined in the County Pedestrian Action Plan. Accomplishing the County's pedestrian safety goals will require sustained emphasis on adequate resources. The PTSAC strongly believes that sustained emphasis on pedestrian safety is a key element of creating more livable communities and will continue to advise the County Executives and Council on accomplishing our shared priorities.